Lost in Your Eyes

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Lost in Your Eyes

by Peri_winkle

Summary

A post apocalypse Hannibal oneshot where Will is forced to work for the wealthy class in one of the post apocalypse communities. There isn't anywhere else to go where one won't be killed by gangs, eaten by zombies, or turned into one as the radiation sickness took hold if one was unlucky enough to be in the danger zones for too long. One day a dangerous cult raids Will's community and takes control. What happens when the cult's menacing leader, Hannibal, takes an interest in Will and his empathy?

Notes

Please read for context:

Takes place in a world where nuclear fallout lead to a apocalyptic world. Those burned by the radiation become mindless killer zombies and those who survived were stuck in the small areas that remained safe from the radiation. In those communities, the wealthy ruled and the poor were forced to work for them in exchange for safety and resources. Dangerous cults and gangs roam outside these communities, raiding them and trying to force their authority onto them. Will is just trying to get through his life as a bored landscaper for one of the estates, and Hannibal (one of the cult leaders) isn't handling his own boredom as well as Will is. He decides that the two of them might be able to help each other with that.

See the end of the work for more notes

Edgar Allen Poe was Will's favorite. His elegant words always painted vivid scenes in Will's mind. The calm but violent words gave Will a strange sense of peace as he challenged himself to create a scene based on the intricate paragraphs he read. He would analyze the words and then create them into a scene and then analyze the scene further. It was similar to a deep meditation for him. It helped keep his empathy disorder in check as well. Since he didn't really socialize with anyone other than his father, the reading helped ease the overwhelming empathy that Will had to get out somehow. He would picture these scenes and take the character's mindset, predicting what they would do and how that lined up with the text. It was always interesting, keeping Will's mind from crumbling under the possessive boredom that came with the life of a servant.

Traditionally, servants were not permitted to learn to read. Well, "permitted" might be too harsh of a word. They weren't expected to have literacy skills. It was pretty unheard of for a servant to be able to read texts, especially ones as detailed as Poe's. Will's father, though, disagreed with that. He taught Will the value of knowledge and thought. Every night when his father would return to their little room, Will was taught how to read, analyze, and observe. No matter how exhausted his father was after a full day's of work, he always made sure that Will was taught his nightly lesson.

The Grahams were a family of fishermen originally. Will's ancestors before him were fishermen by trade, leading Will's father to teach him the trade on the rare days he had off. Those were Will's favorite days. He enjoyed his nightly literacy lessons deeply, but nothing was better than the water rushing over his feet, sounds of the quiet woods, and the "thrill of the chase" when it came to fly fishing. His father explained to him the value of patience, and how there was much more strategy to it than what meets the eye (although it didn't look like much other than just standing in the water and waiting).

They were a small family (just the 2 of them), but they made it work beautifully. Will's father worked as a landscaper to a wealthy family. He was one of the many workers on the estate. One could use the word "taken captive" to describe their situation, but it was more complex than that. Decades before, nuclear fallout and scarcity of resources drove the world into an apocalypse of sorts. Not much was known about the past, though, as many had perished in the fallout along with many records. The world was left in chaos as governments crumbled, and people started to live by their own rules. Certain areas were marked as too contaminated with radiation to be livable, so the world broke apart.

Communities popped up from the rotted earth as safe havens. Those who had survived the fallout with enough money were able to reside in the areas comfortably. The group of estates were seen as prisons as well as oases. In a world of pirates, cults, gangs, pillaging, death, and

radioactive zombies, there were not many other places to go where one wouldn't also be held captive, eaten, or killed. The estate was one of many, a decently sized community of families that managed to use their wealth to stay well off during this time of suffering. Those who couldn't afford to be in the wealthy position were forced to serve them. No one could survive traveling to another community, and they couldn't form a group strong enough to survive it either. So they were stuck. It was: serve them and be safe and fed, or be thrown out into the radioactive zones by the wealthy classes' guards.

Will's grandfather had served the estate, and soon after his father did too. He soon met a beautiful house maid who lived in the servant quarters next to his own, and they fell in love. Will's mother passed in labor, leaving WIll alone with his father, but the man cherished the child, nonetheless, praising the way he was a mirror image of his mother.

Will would reside in their little nine by nine room during the day, while his father worked the grounds. To pass the time, Will would dive into his "studies". He worked daily to strengthen his reading and knowledge with the texts his father would "borrow" from the estate library. It was a risky thing, to be "borrowing" things from the mansion, but Will was eternally grateful. He would go through a single book in only a couple hours. This led to him reading the same one, numerous times a day. Then, when his dad returned after it was too dark to continue working, he would listen to Will's long analyses of the work.

When Will turned 13, he began working under his father, training to take his place one day. Will worked the land and soon grew accustomed to the job itself. It was physically exhausting, but if it was all they had to pay for protection from the outside world, food, and shelter, then it was simply what Will would do. He would cut the grass, tend to the flowers, help maintain the structure of the magnificent house, and anything else the butler would ask of him.

The butler, Jack Crawford, was a kind and cold man. He was in charge of all of the male servants. Alana Bloom was the Housekeeper, head of all the female maids. Will grew to know them well, and had the privilege to call them his friends.

His father taught him many trades, and soon enough, by the time Will turned 22, he was very well versed in anything that would need to be done to fix the house. Anything Jack would ask, Will would be able to do. Fix the broken bathtub, figure out why the pipes wouldn't work, paint the shed, fix the leak in the ceiling, get rid of the moles that dug up the beautifully sculpted lawn, fix the lamp in the front living room, ect. Even Alana would require his assistance with things many times.

The days when his father took him fishing was like a breath of fresh air, literally. After remaining in that dreaded room pretty much his entire childhood, he would jump at any chance to get away from the estate. They would go down to the river at the bottom of the property and enjoy the company of the outdoors in silence. They enjoyed the silence not only for its peace, but also for the fact that it kept them hidden from the dangerous radiation and people lurking outside the communities' property.

Unfortunately, remaining in silence was not enough to protect them from the dangers of the outside. The estate that Will and his father worked at was right along the edge of the territory, along with the river that they would fish in. Despite their quiet presence, a zombie had still found them. His father died protecting Will, giving him the chance to escape. He gave up his life to teach Will, help him grow into the best version of himself with the limited resources they had, and help protect him from the world until the very end. It was a horrid day, and Alana never left his side. She helped him grieve and pick himself back up to continue his work at the estate.

After that day, Will withdrew into himself more so than he already did. He was already a very quiet, modest person. When he lost his father, though, he felt that he lost his connection to everything. His father was the one who grounded him in their horrid situation. Without that connection and grounding, Will soon detached himself from the world and remained distant and aloof. He worked daily, but didn't try to connect with anyone else. He remained in himself and in his own mind. He would daydream about Poe's and Stephen King's words while he worked the grounds as if on autopilot. He wanted nothing to do with those miserable servants who only made him more miserable. His empathy was forced to pick up each and every mindset he was around daily. The constant negative emotions beat him down, and his only escape was the excited, thrilling minds of the characters in his books. He hated to admit that he loved the way the killer's minds made his chest burn with a certain excitement he could only feel in those books.

When Will did socialize, it was with Alana and Jack. It was still a peaceful life. 10 years later, when Will was 32, he kept up this routine. He would wake up, do whatever job Jack or Alana would assign him, and go back to his small room, to the books he would sneak from the library.

Will loved the look of a full bookcase. If he would have to compare the excitement he felt when he saw one to any other feeling, it would have to be compared to the way a child feels when they see a fully stocked candy store. The vibrant colors of each spine gleamed like the colors on candy wrappers. So many choices that it became overwhelming. Each book was a different shade of a different color. The titles would each be in a unique font, spirling down

the spine of each text, beckoning Will closer to them for closer inspection. Even though his time in the library was always short and full of the anxiety of getting caught, it still remained Wills favorite room in the house.

It was small, however, and only had a couple shelves. Will had managed to read every one of them at least twice by now, but he still couldn't calm his craving for knowledge. He was actually in the middle of reading all the texts for the 3rd time when the invasion happened.

He was in the middle of reading one of Dante Alighieri's texts, and it didn't shock him too much when he found himself just as immersed in it as when he read it for the first and second time. It sat under his wiry, tough mattress back in his room as he knelt in a flower bed, planting the last marigold. The hot summer sun was spewing its rays onto the back of his neck, slowly being absorbed into the skin which would soon turn into a slight sunburn by the end of the day. He should request to Jack that he be given a hat to help him finish the yard work, as the sun would only increase in intensity the deeper they got into the summer months.

Leaning back to admire his work, Will sighed, wiping the sweat from his forehead with his forearm. He was pulling off the gardening gloves (that were probably full of sweat by now) when the ground shook. In the distance, there were strange popping sounds and yelling. Will knew they had to be gunshots. He straightened back up and looked around to see what he should do. The energy around their estate seemed to be frozen by the freight of the sudden sounds. It wasn't until Will could see the smoke arising from their neighbors that his legs finally started moving. He ran up the yard from the flower bank he was working at and rushed into the back door to the estate.

The inside was in complete disarray. Workers and guards ran around frantically, and Will even caught sight of the wealthy family joining them in the scrambling. People were grabbing whatever objects they could find, shoving them into whatever carryon they could find, and running out of whatever exit they could find. He spotted the wealthy families that lived in the house running out, cases of radioactive suits in hand. They were leaving. Will didn't even know they had protective suits here to allow one to leave. He suspected no one else knew that as well.

He had entered the house into the kitchen where people were tearing the cabinets apart to get whatever food they could get their hands on. This was an attack they knew no one would make it through, or want to make it through. They were raiding for supplies and trying to make a run for it. They'd rather take their chances out there than stay here. Much of the food they grabbed at, however, was being trampled on and spilled all over the floor. Will was

shoved aside from the doorway as soon as he crossed the threshold. People were pouring out of doors and windows as a steady banging rang from the front door. Someone was trying to get in, but servants were barricading the door.

The scene was too overwhelming for Will to react. Instead he stood against the wall, clutching his gloves in fear and trying to take in the scene before him. He didn't even notice Alana running up to him. She clutched his shoulders tightly and was shouting something at him. He couldn't help but focus on the crisp white color of her blouse. It was tucked neatly into her long pencil skirt, a very neat display to be frank. It contrasted greatly with the chaos and mess around them. He was surprised that there wasn't even a single stain on it. One would think it would have gotten at least somewhat messed up by the mayhem.

"Will!" She shouted, her demanding tone shaking Will from his haze. His cerulean blue eyes snapped up to her french blue ones. "Will, I know there's a lot going on right now, but we need to leave right now."

Suddenly Jack ran up to them as well. Now his uniform looked pretty disheveled, which matched the scene they were currently in. Will could see the sweat dripping down his temple. It almost took away his concentration once again, but he forced himself to focus.

"You two need to get out of here, now, they almost have the door open!" Jack yelled, his booming voice almost hurting Will's ears.

"They're outside! Don't go out there!" A blonde maid by the name of Alice yelled from where she was closing and locking the back door. There was loud banging on that door now too.

Will glanced at the window and could see several sweaty, dirt covered men making obscene gestures at Alice as they jimmied the door knob. They were being invaded by one of the one of those pirate like groups that pillaged communities in this contaminated world. The girl backed away slowly, clutching her chest as she took short panting breaths into her desperate lungs. Will could already picture the scene that the men would make if they got their hands on her. He shivered as the fear that filled him as he thought about her position.

"Now what?!" Alana yelled. Will could hear the crack in her voice as it broke with emotion.

By now her hands had dropped from WIll's shoulders, but the groundskeeper thought it was best to grab onto one of her hands and offer it a tight squeeze.

"We can try and hide, but they'll find us. They'll probably ransack every inch of this place. It may buy us time to sneak out, though," WIll finally spoke up, his voice raspy from not being used all day.

Jack opened his mouth to answer but was cut off by the sound of breaking glass. The men had broken the small window on the back door.

"Here we come, blondie!"

"I'm gonna fuck that tight pussy!"

Will tensed at the crude comments and cat calling they could now hear as they men shouted at Alice. They reached their hands through the broken window to unlock the door.

"We gotta go upstairs now, maybe we can sneak out a window!" Alana shouted. She tightened her grip on Will's hand and pulled him out of the kitchen. Will could feel Jack running behind them just as the men managed to get the door open. They barely made it up to one of the second floor guest rooms before one of the men was chasing them up the crimson carpeted stairs.

Jack slammed the door closed behind him and pinned it shut with his sturdy frame. It provided them just enough time for Will to grab a chair from the desk and Alana to pry open the window. They wedged the chair under the doorknob, stepping back to watch as it kept the door in place despite one of the men trying to bust it open.

"Guys! Let's go!" They turned to see Alana sitting on the edge of the windowsill, confirming that there was no one standing below.

This side of the house had a steep hill along it, so they would be able to safely lower each other down to the ground without needing a rope. Will rushed over to grab Alana's hands and braced his feet against the wall. He watched her climb out of the window as fast as she could without falling. She planted her feet along the boards of the house and slowly slid herself down to the grass. Will grunted against the strain, but only for a second as she let go of his hand and dropped down to the grass. It was only a couple feet, so she only stumbled slightly at the drop.

When she motioned to them that she was okay, Will turned to Jack. With all of the manual labor Will had done around the house over the years, they both knew that he should be the one to help Jack down. Then he could climb down himself and have Jack and Alana help from below.

Will held him with one arm and used the other to grab the side of the window to steady himself. Jack was about half way down when Will heard the chair clatter across the room and the door burst open.

Reluctantly, he let go of Jack's hand in the same moment a hand grabbed onto the back of his t-shirt. It grabbed the shirt from around the collar, pulling him back into the room. The hand soon let go of him, though, flinging him right into a wall. The inertia from the jerking motion caused his head to slam into it as well, making him groan in pain and fall to the floor. A foot kicked his stomach, surely cracking some ribs. Will curled in on himself, sticking his nose into the musty smelling carpet. The dust from it tickled his nose as he took short, deep breaths from the pain.

“They’re getting away!” he heard some men yell as they all crowded around the window, some even climbing out after Alana and Jack.

Will didn’t get a lot of time to think about them, though, as his upper arms were grabbed and he was pulled back up. His feet scrambled against the floor, trying to balance himself between the 2 bodies that held him up. He could barely keep himself upright as he was shoved out of the room and back into the hallway. He was brought back down the stairs, but instead of going back into the kitchen, he was hauled towards the front door.

His hopes for Alana’s and Jack’s escape were soon crushed as he saw them both kneeling in the middle of the grass. They were lined up with a good number of the other staff members, all with their hands held behind their heads as guns pointed at them from every direction.

Pain rocketed up Will's legs as he was shoved next to Alana and told to place his hands on his head as well. He did, slowly, just now finally realizing how much he was shaking at this point. His dry tongue peaked out to try and dampen his chapped lips as a hushed tone fell over the line up. Will took a deep breath, willing himself to expect the worst. He didn't fear death, no one really did living in the world they lived in. Will just didn't want to see his friends suffer. Alana's eyes searched Will's face, her face was neutral but Will could see the fear shining in her eyes. He gave her a soft smile, wishing he could pull her into a hug.

Their locked gaze was soon broken, however, as harsh boots thumped up the dirt pathway towards them. Will didn't need to look up to know who this was. The leader of the gang surveyed them closely, walking down the line as if browsing sheep waiting to be slaughtered. Will tensed at the thought. His jaw tightened and kept his eyes glued to his knees clad in grass stained jeans.

"I'm sure all of you have already heard of me," a voice purred, and even though the man was still several feet from Will, it had sounded like it was whispered into his ear. "But I shall reiterate for the sake of those who are unsure. I am Hannibal Lecter, and I will be running this community from now on. It will soon become a part of my territory, and you all now have a choice. I will make it easy for you, swear loyalty to me and you will live. Go against me, and you will be slaughtered. Either choice you all make will provide a great contribution to my community nonetheless."

Will resisted the urge to roll his eyes. Hannibal Lecter, mainly known as Hannibal the Cannibal, was in control of the largest gang in the area. He was a sophisticated, feared man who would raid communities and take control of them. Those who survived the raid would be given the choice to serve in the man's unified community under his rules, or be slaughtered by his followers and eaten. The apocalypse had made most food extremely scarce, and consequently, Hannibal's followers thought that a perfect solution would be to eat the unwilling. So, yes, either way they would be contributing to the community.

Will snickered at this thought. He didn't realize how loud his laugh might've been until he felt a hand grab his chin and tilt it up. Within a few antagonizing seconds, Will had come to meet Hannibal's eyes straight on. His cinnamon eyes were almost maroon and were as intense as a shark's. Will found himself looking away. Instead, he looked at the man's high cheekbones and sick, curious expression. The thumb that held his chin in place began to stroke Will's stubble, making him suppress a shudder.

“Not fond of eye contact,” he spoke, his rich accent making his voice sound as smooth as butter. “Are you?”

Will didn’t risk another glance into those dead eyes. “Eyes are distracting.”

Hannibal smiled like a cat that finally caught the mouse. “They are, indeed. They are also seen as windows to the soul.”

“And yours is definitely the best to be looking at,” Will mumbled back, starting to fidget in the predator’s hold. If he was going to die, he wanted it to be done by now.

“I’m sure you would learn to see my methodology eventually,” Hannibal laughed, finally releasing his chin to let it drop back down.

“Yeah, sure,” Will mumbled, looking back to the ground as Hannibal stood back up and resumed his pacing along the line of prisoners.

“I’m sure *all* of you will come to see, soon enough. If you agree to work under me, I will guarantee all of you safety, food, comfort, and equality. Of course, everyone must do their part for our community and adopt our way of life in order for us all to survive. Either accept life under my authority, or simply become nutrients for the rest of us. I won’t be opposed to either choice.” Hannibal ended his speech by standing in front of all of them with his hands clasped behind his back.

All Will could think about at the moment was how the man was wearing a tan button up t-shirt that had blood spewed across the left side of it. It also seeped down his frame and into the green cargo pants he wore. Will imagined the many different circumstances that would have occurred for the blood to splatter like that.

He knew what his choice would be anyway. There was no way he was willingly living under a cannibal in his cannibal cult. Fuck that. Even as many of the servants stood up and accepted Hannibal’s offer, Will remained on his knees, hands resting in his lap. His eyes did shoot up, though, as he saw Alana and Jack stand up in the corner of his eye. He shot them a look, but they avoided it as they stepped forward. Alana rested a hand on his shoulder as she rose. As

she walked forward, her hand slid from where it rested. The gesture spoke for itself: “Come with us, don’t be stupid”.

He could understand their decision. Even if they did manage to escape death, where would they go? They would only run into deadlier gangs on the outside of this community. And why refuse Hannibal’s offer? It seemed perfect enough. Their lives would be substantially better. Hannibal had been rumored to be a sufficient leader, actually. His people seemed to thrive under his authority. All this was for them was a simple change in management. Will didn’t seem to care too much, though, as he remained on the ground. He glanced to his left and found that another older gentleman had also stayed knelt on the ground with Will. He recognized him to be one of the men who would tend to the sheep. Will had never talked to him, not that he could remember.

“You refuse?” Hannibal asked, as if he were surprised. There was bound to be at least one stubborn soul in each group he terrorized that would refuse him. At least one person who would rather accept death than give in to such morals.

“I stand by my morals,” the old man spat. “I won’t be one of you disgusting cannibals, no matter the quality of life.”

Hannibal simply nodded. He waved his hand and several shots hit the old man’s body. He fell back in a jerking motion. A small splatter of his blood stained Will’s thigh. Will looked at it, feeling his heart explode with the emotions from the scene.

“And how about you, my dear?” Hannibal purred. He actually approached Will once again and crouched to be level with him. “You refuse me as well?”

“I’d imagine it quite obvious.”

Hannibal chuckled at Will’s attempt at resistance. “I see, I was hoping that everyone would see reason in this situation.”

Will didn’t answer and simply stayed staring at the man’s hand that hung loosely over his knee. He flinched when it lifted up to grab Will’s chin again. Will tried to jerk back, but the

hand was faster and forced Will to look into Hannibal's dark eyes once again.

"What is it about eye contact that you dislike so much?"

Will frowned in confusion. "They're distracting."

Hannibal hummed. "You said that. How?"

"Well, see too much, not enough. And it's hard to focus when you're thinking: those whites are really white, or he must have hepatitis, or is that a burst vein?" Will knew he was rambling, and wished he would just stop. The conversation was odd though, making Will too nervous to have a clear mind.

Hannibal smirked. "So you are not just a pretty face, then, huh? What a mind you have there, surprising for a servant to have such comprehension. Quite interesting indeed."

"Well, I don't find *you* that interesting, to be frank."

Will's chin was finally released. "You will."

Instead of a bullet in the forehead, which is what Will was expecting, his arms were grabbed once again and he was hauled into a standing position.

"Shall we return to the main estate then?" Hannibal asked, standing and turning around to walk back across the lawn that Will had just cut the day before. He waved his hand to a section of his men, and Will didn't have much of a choice as he was dragged along.

When his muddy boots finally managed to find their footing, Will allowed himself to be led to a large van. He craned his neck behind him to see Alana and Jack's petrified stares. He offered them a small smile. It was strange that they didn't kill him right there like they did with the old man, but Will didn't think about that too much. This is what he wanted. It was

obvious he would die soon. The idea of being food for these people made Will sick to his stomach, but he had already dug his grave. This endless cycle of mindlessly working for no greater gain for himself needed to end. This impulsive decision seemed to settle surprisingly well in Will's gut as he was stuffed into the back of the van. No longer would he have to serve the wealthy and oppressive for his own survival; he would finally be free. If he had to go through another day of cutting that damn lawn and fixing the leaky sink in the second floor bathroom, he just might kill himself ultimately. So either way, he knew where he would end up. Maybe there was an afterlife, too. Who knew? Will could wake up and find himself able to contently fish in a quiet river alongside his father for eternity. And how he missed his dad.

A tense air blanketed the back of the van as it started up and pulled forward. Will wrinkled his nose at the stench that resided in the vehicle, a mixture of sweat and musk. One of the men had secured Will's wrists in a pair of handcuffs, as if they were necessary. They began to talk amongst themselves, excited about their successful raid. It seemed that Alana, Jack, and all of the other servants would stay at that estate, unless they wished to move to another. Hannibal had assigned a head man (or woman) at each estate to run it. The helps' quarters would be fixed up, so there would be residents sharing the living space in the estate as well as in the small shacks in the back of the property. Their skills would be analyzed and they would be placed where they would be able to benefit the community the most.

An optimal plan. Satisfaction and efficiency all included. The scales were evened enough for many to simply go along with it. Too bad Will had already checked out of this life. He wouldn't work for another soul. Fuck that.

All the bodies in the van jerked forward slightly as it came to a halt. Will's stomach flipped as the doors burst open and his upper arm was grabbed once again. He scrambled out of the van and into the yard of another estate. This had to be the main house, Will thought as he considered the massive size of the mansion they were brought to.

The sun was now dipping in the sky, signaling that the evening was under way. Their house had to be the last one of the raid, considering that the leader was walking in front of them up to the front door. Will watched him lazily as he spoke to another man in a hushed voice. They both shared a laugh, Hannibal lightly smacking the other's arm playfully.

Swallowing down the thick fear that wormed its way up Will's throat, he took one last longing look at the sun before being jerked up the front stairs. He lost his footing for a second, but regained it as they entered the house. It was bustling with a panicked energy that also seemed controlled in a way. Boxes were scattered all over the place and the group of

men that had rode in the van with them had now dispersed. Hannibal stopped in the center of the foyer, seeming to be tying up his conversation as he adjusted his shirt. Will felt his lips curl into a grimace as he realized the man tugging on his arm was walking right up to the leader.

"Sir," the man said, voice steady but covered in a questioning tone. He shook Will's arm slightly as if to silently say, what do I do with this?

Hannibal turned to them, eyebrows raised as if he had forgotten about Will's existence. Upon meeting Will's darkened eyes, he smiled. "Of course, my apologies. I can take it from here. You can go to your quarters now, Luca. Thank you."

Will glanced over to the wall as his arm was released and "Luca" rushed away with a quick nod. The wall had a harsh dark red paint on it that made the room feel impossibly small and suffocating. He looked at the countless boxes laying on the musty looking oriental rug instead.

"Would you mind telling me your name?" Hannibal said, snapping Will's attention back to him. He looked down as the man took Will's handcuffs and inspected them.

"Will Graham." His voice was tense and emotionless.

"Well then, Will, shall we go upstairs?"

How did this guy seem to be such a gentleman even as he marched Will to his death? Reluctantly, Will stepped forward and allowed Hannibal to guide him up the stairs. A hand rested along the small of his back, and Will cringed at the sudden physical contact. His heart raced in confusion as they walked to the third floor and towards the master bedroom. Will found each following step to be harder to take than the last as Hannibal pushed him over the threshold.

The saliva building up in his mouth would no longer go down his throat, and Will thought he was going to choke as he was guided to sit on the plush bed. If he wasn't sure he would die soon, he might've enjoyed the feeling of the soft bed more (compared to the springs he slept

on back in his own quarters). His breath hitched as Hannibal knelt down on the floor in front of him, holding the key to the handcuffs. His brain finally caught up to the situation at hand. Scenarios flashed through his mind as he began to feel panic bubble inside him.

"You don't…assault your victims before you kill them…right?" Will asked, breaking the tense silence between them. There was always the threat of that at the hands of these pillaging cults. Will's heart hammered at the thought of it.

Hannibal's maroon eyes snapped up to his own, his hands stopping their fiddling with the cuff's lock. His eyebrows raised for Will to elaborate.

Releasing a hesitate breath, Will whispered, "...s-sexually…I mean."

He watched in horror as Hannibal's mouth twisted into a smile as he barked out a laugh. It was a deep and genuine one, too.

"I apologize for the situation's appearance, I did not intend to give you that idea in the slightest. These cuffs are simply way too tight, and I wanted to fix them. One can see your wrists have already sustained some irritation." He spoke as if all of this was normal.

Will was starting to get angry. He had made his decision. Why was he sitting on a comfortable looking bed having the cuts on his wrists fussed over? The cuffs were loosened slightly, no longer cutting into the pale skin of his wrists.

"There, is that better?"

Will remained silent, staring at the red comforter in thought.

"Will?"

Fuck this guy, Will thought bitterly as he spat his next words. “What’s going on here? Shouldn’t I be in the basement being carved up by now?”

Hannibal shrugged, letting go of Will’s hands so they rested in his lap once again. “I figured we could socialize, like adults. God forbid we become friendly.”

With his accent, the word “adults” sounded more like “add-ults” as it flowed out of Hannibal’s mouth.

“I’ve already expressed my lack of interest in you, in your community.”

“And I had said that I know it will spark soon enough.” Hannibal stood up, brushing off his pant legs.

“You also said that we had 2 choices, and mine hasn’t been carried out yet. You had that other man…killed for fuck’s sake.” Will’s voice trembled at the thought of those lifeless eyes. The blood on his pants was now a dark black looking stain.

Hannibal seemed to ponder Will’s statement as he walked over to one of the many stacks of boxes along the wall. He dug through one, pulling out a towel. “Why do you crave death so much, William?”

“Don’t call me that,” Will snapped, standing from the bed now.

“My apologies,” Hannibal said, turning to Will in surprise. “Will, then, the reasoning behind your resolute death wish?”

Will sputtered in a disgusted shock at the man’s audacity. “I-I fail to see how it isn’t self explanatory.”

“And I fail to see how you could refuse my gracious offer before.”

The ashy haired man walked back over to Will, towel in hand.

"Well I must've forgotten that not everyone has been forced into a life of servitude," Will said, snarling slightly. He stared down at the pale purple towel being offered to him, not making a single move to reach and grab it.

"I see, you have grown bored of your current lifestyle." Hannibal shook the towel once again, practically pushing it into Will's hand. The brunette was forced to grab onto it as it would have fallen to the floor otherwise. It was plush and soft, just like the bed had been. "So bored that it made anything, even death, seem desirable."

"Bored," Will chuckled. "That would not be the term I would use."

"Then what term *would* you use?"

Will watched wearily as Hannibal continued to dig through the boxes, pulling out several clothes.

"Probably depressed," Will said with a small dry laugh.

"Ah," was all Hannibal said as he pulled one last thing from the box. "I can imagine. You would be surprised by the number of people who have died willingly during our raids. Those who refuse, like you."

"You say it like it's so casual, that you slaughter innocents daily."

Hannibal walked back over to Will, seeming to want him to take this pile of clothes from him now, too.

“I believe a lot of things have had to become casual in this current state the world is in,” he paused, pushing the clothes into Will’s arms. “Now, I’ll have some warm water brought up and you can wash up.”

Will just stood their stupidly as Hannibal walked back out the door and down the hallway. He opened his mouth to protest or ask what the hell was happening, but nothing would come out. Hannibal came back after only a few seconds and smiled lightly at Will’s expression.

“Are you opposed to that as well?” he asked, clasping his hands behind his back.

Finally, Will found his voice, though it sounded shaky and small. “I-N-no, I mean. I’d rather just get my death wish over with if you don’t mind.”

Hannibal sighed, turning to look through the boxes once again. “I’m afraid that won’t be happening anymore.”

Will gaped once again. “W-what do you mean?”

“I can explain, but perhaps tomorrow? It has been a long day for everyone. I’m sure you would agree,” he sighed, rubbing the bridge of his nose as if to further prove his exhaustion.

“This is ridiculous,” Will sighed back, sounding a lot like a tennager to their parent. “Fine.”

Hannibal looked like the dog who just got his dinner. He smiled widely, motioning to a side door in the room. Will approached it, walking through once Hannibal opened it for him. This bathroom was definitely one of the biggest Will have ever seen, or imagined. He took his time, taking in the detailed wallpaper that was covered in intricate gold patterns. He wished that his hands weren’t full so he could run a finger along it. As he looked, Hannibal had let some random guy in who was carrying two large buckets of water. Another followed close behind and the tub was soon filled with steaming water.

Will looked at it skeptically. “I’m not gonna be soup, am I?”

Hannibal chuckled, turning to go back to the bedroom. “I can assure you, I wouldn’t lower my standards as much to make a stunning thing like you into simple soup. Maybe a foie gras au torchon if I had to choose.”

He stood in front of Will before he left the bathroom. His hand came up to play with one of Will’s curls that hung over his forehead. “I will be in the bedroom when you are done.”

He didn’t give Will a chance to respond as he turned and closed the door. The key glistened from where it sat on the counter, apparently Hannibal had left it there so Will could bathe. Once his wrists were free, Will felt himself relax instantly. He wedged the bench from the vanity under the door to prevent anyone else from coming in, and started to check the drawers. He knew Hannibal wasn’t stupid enough to leave them full of potential weapons Will could use, but he figured he might as well check before he relieved himself and started to undress. When he came up with nothing useful, he sighed and stepped into the bath. It felt so much better than the freezing buckets he would pour over himself back at the other estate. Despite the urge to lay in the warm bath forever, Will kept his time short in there as he quickly scrubbed the dirt off his skin and hair with lovely smelling soaps. When he dressed in the sweat pants and t-shirt that Hannibal had left for him, removed the bench, and cracked open the door, he saw that Hannibal was perched on one side of the bed, reading some papers. He seemed to have bathed as well, hair still damp across his forehead and now dressed in similar clothes to Will’s.

He hesitantly stepped back into the room, unsure what to do with himself. He was unsure about a lot of things right now, actually.

“How was the bath, Will?” Hannibal asked, not even glancing up from the papers.

“Fine,” Will muttered in return. “Great actually.”

“I’m glad. I don’t imagine you have been able to have a proper one in a while.”

Will mozzied over to a desk that held a few boxes on it as well as blueprints and maps. They were plans for the raid. One stood out to Will, though. It had names listed next to every estate. He saw Luca’s name listed among the ones for the house they were currently in. It also

included Hannibal's name. So Will was right, Hannibal divided up the estates to his “generals” and followers to reside in. And to think this was only a portion of their group, another half (at least) resided in the other communities that they had taken over.

“What am I here for?” Will asked suddenly, startling himself at his own outburst.

Hannibal hummed in confusion, finally raising his eyes from where they were glued to the papers in his lap. Will crossed his arms and leaned against the desk.

“A pet? A housewife? A toy? Or is the meal option still standing? Although I doubt it since if it was, I wouldn't still be here. And this doesn’t seem to be sexual…I don’t think.” WIll was just thinking out loud at this point, not actually expecting to get a serious answer from Hannibal. He did suspect that the man wasn’t so sure himself, either.

“Is simply being intrigued by you not enough?” the man had folded his hands over the papers in his lap now.

Will snorted. “No, I mean- maybe, but it’s just-”

“Unforeseen?” Hannibal cut in.

“Weird.” Will finished. “And creepy to be frank.”

Hannibal’s shoulders jerked with a small laugh. “I would be lying if I said that I haven’t been called those words before.”

“So that’s it. You’re just bored.” Will stared at the rug, avoiding Hannibal's calculating gaze as he pondered this.

“Maybe I’m depressed.”

That wasn’t funny. “That’s not funny,” Will huffed. “My life and free will isn’t yours to control to try and cure your boredom.”

“Maybe we can help cure each other’s then,” Hannibal offered, setting the packet of pages on the nightstand.

“Now that's definitely a healthy idea.”

“Is anything in this world remotely healthy anymore?”

Will threw his hands up. “Stop using the circumstances as an excuse for your sick behavior.”

“Fine. Yes, I am bored. Quite frankly, all of these people bore me to death. It has been fun, and despite what you may think, I have done much to benefit those who chose to join my community. I still can’t help but feel unsatisfied, though.”

“And I am supposed to miraculously cure that dissatisfaction? I fail to see how you don’t think that, maybe, just maybe, all the lives you’ve taken haven’t had some involvement in this.”

Hannibal shook his head in amusement. When he raised his eyes back to Will, the brunette got a sick feeling at the look of admiration in Hannibal's eyes. “I can assure you that I am very comfortable in my actions and their repercussions.”

Of course Will knew that. Hannibal was very much content with what he was doing. He was just simply bored with it. Will could understand that, he guessed. Things were starting to become too easy.

“I’m a challenge then,” Will started. “You want a new task, different from the ones you’ve already gone through. So I’m a new challenge, a new puzzle for you to play with. And I’m

sure as soon as you solve it, you'll kill me. Dinner will be served."

Hannibal hummed in thought. "Perhaps, though I do not eat my equals. And I am led to believe that you are closer to being my equal than most of the men out there."

"You're sure about that?" Will could feel his palms start to grow damp already. He rubbed them against his pants.

"Certainly." Hannibal smiled. "I can be a new puzzle for you as well, Will. I sense something special in you, in your mind. Something is rooted there that leaves you uneasy."

"Empathy," Will answered simply. He questioned the way he was opening up to Hannibal with such ease.

Hannibal's eyebrows shot up. "An empathy disorder?"

Will kept his eyes on the ground, leaning against the desk with his arms crossed.

"I imagine what you see and learn touches everything else in your mind. Your values and decency oppressed and yet shocked at your associations. How that must affect you, I wonder."

"I'd rather not be psychoanalyzed."

Will could see Hannibal shrug in the corner of his eye. "I'm sorry Will, observing is what I do. I can't shut mine off anymore than you can shut yours off."

"Please," Will seethed. "Don't psychoanalyze me. You won't like me when I'm psychoanalyzed."

The sandy haired man seemed unfazed by Will's attempt to intimidate. He probably seemed no more frightening than a small cornered dog. "Pure empathy, a rare yet uncomfortable gift. Your perception is a tool pointed at both ends I'd imagine."

"Which is why you are the last person I want to be around."

"I think you'll learn to tolerate my company soon enough."

Will finally raised his gaze to look Hannibal in the eyes. He imagined black antlers sprouting from his skull like a wendigo. And his empathy seemed to bask in the pure evil he saw in those maroon eyes.

End Notes

I loved this idea so much that I'll most likely be continuing it and making it into a series :) let me know your thoughts and be on the lookout for updates <3

UPDATE 5/25/22: thank you all so so much for all the comments and kudos! I actually do plan on continuing this and making it into a series, so stay tuned! :)

UPDATE 6/13/22: Next part to series is posted!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!